



Strategic Landpower Task Force: Strategic Landpower in U.S. Conduct Of Modern Warfare

November 5, 2014 | Cadet Hamad Agha, Cadet Christopher Dante, Cadet Gregory Rice, Cadet Kord Roberts, Cadet Jackson Turner

Foreword.

U.S. national security strategy is in the midst of a historic transformation as direct American military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan ends and the nation searches for ways to exercise power more efficiently than in the past. The Army has a greater stake in this than any of the other services since the very purpose of America's ground forces is part of the debate.

In response, the Army has undertaken both introspection as it examines and refines its contribution to national power and participated in the wider discussion on America's global purpose and the appropriate use of the U.S. military. As an important part of this, the Army recently released a new version of its overarching operational concept intended to describe "the Army's contribution to globally integrated operations."^{*}

Three big ideas frame the Army's case for its continued relevance.^{**} The first idea is that the Army is the military service with the widest range of capabilities, and hence the most versatile. In a complex security environment without a single clear threat, versatility is invaluable, giving American political leaders a wide range of options when they face a crisis or threat. The second big idea is that the Army gives American policymakers the option to seek a truly decisive outcome to an armed conflict if they so choose. Being able to destroy targets from a distance, while important, has limits. By contrast, troops on the ground among the population can alter whatever political factors initially led to the conflict. The third big idea is that the deployment of effective ground

forces is crucial to demonstrate American commitment to a partner or ally. As General David Perkins wrote in the preface to the new operating concept, "Although there are political costs and sensitivities associated with the employment of U.S. ground forces, the presence or arrival of credible Army forces demonstrates U.S. resolve and commitment to partners and adversaries."

Much of the most vigorous debate over the Army's role has been framed within a concept called "strategic landpower." One of the most important aspects of this has been to remind the military services and the wider defense community that the psychological component of armed conflict—its "human domain"—is as important or perhaps more important than the physical.

That is where this manuscript by Hamad Agha, Christopher Dante, Gregory Rice, Kord Roberts, and Jackson Turner contributes to the discussion. Written while the authors were cadets at the U.S. Military Academy, it seeks to link the broad concepts of grand strategy, particular the role of ground forces in helping exercise control during a crisis or conflict, to the way the Army is organized, educated, and trained for operations.

While the authors did not intend to generate revolutionary concepts, the value of the paper is its synthesis of several diverse lines of thought into a package that captures the essence of the discussion of strategic landpower. It is useful for strategic thinkers both inside and outside the Army to use to quickly grasp the essence of the debate. The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to provide this forum for strategic thinking by some of the Army's future leaders.

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You can fly over a land forever, you may bomb it, atomize it, and wipe it clean of life but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization you must do this on the ground, the way the Roman Legions did, by putting your young men into the mud.

T.E. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*¹

Introduction.

Our examination of strategic Landpower begins at the grand strategy level. As we move further into the 21st century, the role of information technology and its corresponding effect on world globalization becomes more influential in policymaking. Although the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) traditionally have intervened in other nations' civil wars and internal strife with multinational support and strong coalitions, the United States is moving away from this doctrine and acting more unilaterally in the wake of the deadly attacks of September 11, 2001. Accordingly, we are shifting our strategy and operational art away from focusing on large, international conventional war. Countering the Soviet onslaught through the Fulda Gap is no longer the major training focus for the U.S. Army. Instead, stabilization operations are becoming our main focus. In 2005, Steven Metz and Raymond Millen state in their article, "Intervention, Stabilization, and Transformation: The Role of Landpower in the New Strategic Environment," that the Army was not re-evaluating its strategic thinking very quickly. Simply put, our military strategies and operational concepts were insufficient for our goal of being a stabilizing force.²

Another *Parameters* article focusing on the role of strategic Landpower is Lukas Milevski's "Fortissimus Inter Pares." This article explains the concept of Landpower as the most dominant of the three current models of military power, the other two being airpower and seapower. Landpower gains this dominance due to its unique ability to exercise control over territory, as opposed to airpower's and seapower's ability to interdict or deny an enemy control over territory.³ This is relevant to our research because counterinsurgency and stability operations can only be conducted through the exercise of strategic control. This is due to Landpower's unique interaction with what strategists have dubbed "the human domain." Airpower and seapower have a much more limited interaction in this regard.

Despite the dominance of Landpower, there are critics who think the United States needs to cut its Landpower forces. Metz and others argue against this, instead claiming that the best option for the future is maintaining a large, joint force. Although we do not know what future conflict will look like exactly, it is likely that we will face another protracted counterinsurgency campaign. This does not rule out the possibility of a large conventional war. In either case, Landpower will be critical to conducting war successfully and keeping the United States in a strong position internationally.

Defining Strategic Landpower.

Currently, the United States struggles with the use of strategic Landpower in the service of national policy objectives. The most recent examples are the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq where U.S. military forces fought to bring peaceful resolutions to the conflicts and achieve national political goals over a period of more than a decade of war. The defense community has no coherent definition of Landpower, making it difficult to use Landpower effectively in today's conflicts.

This is in direct contrast to proponents of airpower and seapower in the evolving doctrine of Air-Sea Battle and Area-Denial/Anti-Access warfare. There is a difficulty in understanding just what exactly Landpower is, how to best employ it on the modern battlefield, and how it serves political objectives stemming from the national interest. This Of Interest paper is studying Landpower, along with its connection to serving the national policy objectives of the United States and whether it is utilized effectively in the Army, Special Operations Command (SOCOM), and the Marine Corps (USMC).

The definition of Landpower is contentious at its core and made even more so by its proponents in the Army and SOCOM who espouse different opinions on what it is and how to properly utilize it in the context of military force. Additionally, the USMC lacks a coherent definition of what Landpower is and how expeditionary forces can best serve in its capacity, therefore there are no definite definitions to be drawn among their ranks for this analysis. Definitions from the Army and the special operations forces (SOF) community range from high context discussions by Dr. Steven Metz of the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College and Dr. Lukas Milevski writing for the Army War College, to low context expositions given by Admiral William McRaven, Lieutenant General Charles Cleveland, and Lieutenant Colonel Prescott Farris in SOCOM. The divide between the Army and SOCOM revolves around the primary use of indigenous or external forces to provide the assets for national Landpower in wars supporting U.S. national interests.

Top Army leaders established the Strategic Landpower Task Force in an attempt to better circumscribe and understand the concept of Landpower so that they could ultimately utilize it more effectively in ground operations in times of war.⁴ The Task Force evolved into a plan to create interdependent relationships between the Army, SOCOM/SOF community, and the USMC in a holistic approach involving all Landpower assets within the national defense establishment. Discussions centered on the central role of Landpower in today's conflicts and the need for continued land operations in order to achieve decisive outcomes in the nation's wars.⁵ The human domain, made up of the political, social, economic, cultural, and information environment of societies and the psychological aspects in real or potential combat permeates warfare, specifically

in the use of ground forces utilizing Landpower in the national interest.⁶ The concepts are broad and serve as a solid starting point for framing the issue, but it requires further study and research since there is no single definition of Landpower or what constitutes its use in the operation of military force. The establishment of the Task Force was the first attempt to integrate Landpower elements comprehensively and devise a robust understanding of Landpower in the context of future conflicts.

The views of the SOCOM community expressed by Cleveland and Farris capture the desire of elite special operations forces working in conjunction with partners across the globe to create a strategic Landpower network.⁷ This idea would use the Landpower forces of other partner nations and of friendly host nation forces in conjunction with elite U.S. SOF. These forces would execute strategic Landpower across the globe without having the United States shoulder the primary burden of ground operations and without the need for a sustained unilateral nation building effort.⁸ Under this concept, the major conventional forces of the U.S. Army and USMC would be in a reduced capacity with partner nations, or in the case of extreme necessity, such as in a state-on-state conflict or if host nations did not provide adequate support in achieving operational objectives. Additionally, the idea extends to maintaining an interdependent relationship between SOCOM and conventional forces in any future conflict. Other considerations include the belief in a sixth domain of warfare, the human domain, and the superiority of partner or host nations primarily engaging in ground operations in areas they are familiar with or the indigenous national defense force.⁹ Concerns for this approach revolve around the “special” nature of SOFs in that they are reserved for small-scale operations and should not be used as a replacement for, or take on the traditional missions of, conventional forces and that the strategic Landpower network is a way of outsourcing Landpower outside the United States.

Publications in *Parameters* and at the U.S. Army War College by Dr. Lukas Milevski show the Army’s approach to the issue of Landpower in a high level context compared to that of the SOCOM community. Dr. Milevski’s article, “Inter Pares: Utility of Landpower in Grand Strategy,” creates a comprehensive framework on the definition of Landpower and its use through the method of control for achieving national policy objectives. Landpower will be provided predominantly through the primary use of conventional U.S. military ground force assets, but it does not exclude the integration of other ground forces in the defense establishment working in a joint effort. Landpower is based on the control of time and space to eliminate the sources of an adversary’s power. This is in order to limit his strategic countermoves in a downward spiral of continued irrelevance on the part of the enemy.¹⁰ As the enemy’s sources of power dissipate and that of the

U.S. continue to grow, the accomplishment of national policy objectives becomes increasingly certain.¹¹ Landpower is the only form of national power with the capability to take, protect, and hurt an opponent in war by taking his territory, holding it for our own use, and turning the advantages thus accrued against the dwindling resources available to him over time and space.¹² Landpower is definitive and provides the most complete subjugation of an enemy to our will, therefore it is the strongest tool of national power, but it is also fraught with the most risk. The costs and duration of a conflict based on the use of strategic Landpower cannot be determined in advance nor can the outcome of the conflict be certain from the outset. Friction, uncertainty, and danger affect Landpower to a greater degree than other forms of national power in the use of grand strategy; therefore it must be used in the proper context of national policy objectives.¹³

For the purpose of this report, the work done by Dr. Milevski is used as the basis for defining strategic Landpower as well as what constitutes its use in the service of national policy objectives. The work of the Strategic Landpower Task Force provides the starting point for study on strategic Landpower, but it remains incomplete and therefore was not used as a framework for case studies utilizing Landpower by the U.S. Army, SOCOM, and the USMC in the nation's conflicts. The views of the SOCOM community focus on the future use of Landpower, but they do not provide a comprehensive framework for Landpower or its constituent parts in the use of the U.S. Army or the USMC and concentrate primarily on SOCOM units in the international arena. In conclusion, strategic Landpower is control of time, space, and the sources of power of an opponent by taking and protecting land and hurting the enemy by doing so. Landpower provides national policymakers with the capability to destroy the enemy's ability to be an independent political player in opposition to our will.¹⁴ Landpower suffers from the effects of friction, uncertainty, and danger to a greater degree than other sources of national military power and its costs cannot be ascertained ahead of time, but it provides the most definitive act in furtherance of national policy objectives.

Efficacy of Landpower in U.S. Strategy.

Understanding how to use Landpower to achieve national strategic objectives requires understanding which of these objectives requires the use of a land-based military force. Specifically, of the 10 priorities of global defense outlined by the Department of Defense (DoD) in 2012, which of these require a Landpower force? They are not explicitly specified, though can easily be discerned through close examination. Of these 10, five of them obviously require a Landpower element in some form, and three almost entirely depend upon either the U.S. Army,

USMC, or SOF. Having Landpower is essentially having control over an area of the land, and any interaction with indigenous personnel, whether they are military or civilian, requires that we exercise this control. Air and sea power forces can deny an enemy control over an area and maintain allied nations' control over that area, but only Landpower can exercise this control.¹⁵

DoD's first listed priority is conducting counterterrorism and irregular warfare. The strategic guidance specifically mentions al-Qaeda and Afghanistan, reflecting U.S. continuing commitment to the Middle East; however, this priority reaches beyond this one group and region. In order to conduct counterterrorism successfully, the document claims that we must conduct operations "characterized by a mix of direct action and security force assistance."¹⁶ In this case, the term "direct action" is used in a doctrinal publication, so it refers specifically to a military's "small-scale strikes and other offensive actions conducted as a special operation;"¹⁷ this precludes the use of air strikes and seapower. Additionally, security force assistance is typically relegated to the SOF community, but in recent conflicts the regular U.S. Army and USMC increasingly have borne the burden of training and guiding fledgling host-nation security units such as the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police. Training these host-nation personnel requires advising forces to exercise control over the land, in order to manage the host-nation training facilities, achieve recruitment quotas, and capitalize on these units' local expertise. As the DoD strategic priority specifically states, "we will continue to build and sustain tailored capabilities,"¹⁸ this aspect maintains its relevance.

Another strategic priority that requires Landpower is deterrence. A term typically associated to nuclear strategy, deterrence simply means prevention of conflict by causing an enemy to believe that aggression would result in consequences that are unacceptable to them. In this section, the DoD states that it requires a "combined arms campaign," encompassing all domains of warfare.¹⁹ However, it also specifically calls for the ability "to secure territory and populations,"²⁰ a capability unique to Landpower, as all human populations live on land. The presence of U.S. forces are intrinsically an aspect of deterrence, since hostile nations are less likely to conduct open aggression against one of our allies if they run the risk of engaging our forces. If an aggressive power can overrun and subjugate one of its neighbors quickly, i.e., before U.S. forces can respond, they would be more likely to attempt to do so. However, allied nations with strong U.S. garrisons are assured a measure of deterrence for themselves as well for the United States. This was true for Germany during the Cold War and is true for South Korea now.

The third strategic priority that requires Landpower is to defend the homeland and support civil authorities.²¹ The first part is not difficult for the U.S. Army and USMC, as our only two neighbors share close diplomatic ties and good economic relations. Given our distance from most of our adversaries and the geographic isolation of our nation, homeland defense is more of a task for the Navy and Air Force—and the DoD specifically states the necessity of “robust missile defense.”²² However, support to civil authorities is an ongoing process in several realms, including law enforcement, border security, counterterror, counterdrug, and disaster relief. *Joint Publication (JP) 3-28* further elaborates upon these actions. Roles within civil support that the DoD specifically delegates to Landpower elements are chiefly to do with command and control as well as logistics. First, U.S. Army North is responsible for providing 10 Defense Coordination Officers to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regional headquarters, and more if necessary in extreme circumstances.²³ Additionally, special events such as a sporting event, festival, political rally, or anywhere an unusually large crowd may gather for an extended time will likely have military personnel operating in support of local law enforcement. While all military forces possess unique capabilities that may be required by civil authorities, Landpower is the only one capable of providing the logistical framework required for problems in the continental United States.

The fourth strategic priority intrinsically requiring Landpower is the requirement to conduct stability and counterinsurgency operations.²⁴ Though similar to counterterrorism, this aspect requires the United States to emphasize “nonmilitary means and military to military cooperation” to correct instability.²⁵ This aspect of our security strategy focuses less on conflict resolution and more on conflict prevention. Additionally, this aspect allows for use of air, land, and sea power, since cooperative and joint exercises are possible with fleets, fighter squadrons, or maneuver battalions. However, again adopting a mindset of the exercise of control rather than simply denying it to the enemy or retaining it, Landpower is going to be the most important asset to meeting this end. Interaction between military forces of two allied states is an important tool for enabling successful joint operations in the case that conflict arises. Using nonmilitary means to interact with local populations, and presumably to advise and assist law enforcement, requires face-to-face interactions with nonmilitary personnel. Once again, this points to the necessity of Landpower and the strategic impact that it alone can provide.

The last strategic priority that unquestionably requires Landpower is the requirement to be able to conduct humanitarian and disaster relief operations.²⁶ First, humanitarian operations are essential to providing stability. Insurgencies and terrorist organizations rely on instability, whether due to natural disaster, crime, political turmoil, or manmade atrocity to gain power and legitimacy.

In order to counter this threat, the United States has to be ready and able to assist allied or neutral countries and the UN in the event of catastrophic events. Here, Landpower is not as necessary abroad as it would be at home, mostly due to logistics. DoD strategic guidance specifically indicates U.S. airlift and sealift capabilities as being “rapidly deployable.”²⁷

Finally, of the other strategic priorities outlined by the DoD, there are some in which Landpower is completely irrelevant. For example, one of these priorities is for the military to “maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent.”²⁸ The U.S. Army and USMC maintain no nuclear capabilities, leaving this task solely to the Air Force and Navy. Another example is the need to operate successfully in space and cyberspace. Ground forces have no relevance in space, and beyond the realm of surveillance and communications satellites, warfare in space is still relegated to the pages of science fiction. Cyberspace and the information dimension of warfare is perhaps more appropriate to the technology-heavy Air Force and Navy, and although the Army’s Signal Corps is responsible for coordination, dissemination, and security of information between ground forces, it does not exercise Landpower in itself and is merely an asset for the Army at large. This said, half of the DoD’s strategic priorities need Landpower in order to exercise the necessary territorial control to accomplish national policies.

U.S. Army Landpower.

The U.S. Army and all of its various components traditionally have been the primary source of Landpower for the United States since its founding. The Army is the primary Landpower force that the nation maintains for use in a wide variety of conflicts and strategies. It is by far the largest in size. Over the course of our nation’s short history, the actual size of the Army has fluctuated greatly. However, when our nation has decided to enter itself fully into a land conflict, the Army is almost always the largest participant for a number of reasons. It provides the widest variety of land force capabilities with the largest and most capable logistical network to support it. Its sheer wartime size alone makes it the most predisposed to destroy an opposing nation’s forces, occupy a large nation, and provide stability to facilitate the buildup of a new government.

While the Army’s concept of how it uses Landpower has changed doctrinally over the course of history, its essentials have remained the same. During the American Revolutionary War, the Continental Army fought the British for control of key regions and cities in the original 13 colonies. When the British will to fight was depleted and they withdrew from the continent, the Continental Army was left to maintain control and stability while the new government was forged. During the

American Civil War, the Armies of the South and the North fought for control of key states and territories as well as the destruction of the opposing army so that control could be established and political will imposed. During World War I, the Army fought as part of a coalition force that defended France by helping to defeat the Germans on multiple fronts. They fought primarily for control of land and destruction of the German Army and subsequently its will to fight. The Army remained in France to deter further aggression, maintain stability, and facilitate the reconstruction of France. In the European theater during World War II, the U.S. Army assisted multiple nations in destroying the Nazi war machine on the ground on multiple fronts. The emergence of the Cold War put the Army in Korea and Vietnam, thousands of miles from American shores, to use Landpower in various capacities to accomplish the policy objectives of the United States. In the Persian Gulf, during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, the Army assisted in the destruction of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Army in order to prevent him from using further aggression on neighboring countries like Kuwait. In the post-September 11, 2001, Iraq war, the Army was the driving force behind the invasion, destruction of the Iraqi Army, occupation, and subsequent counterinsurgency operations. In Afghanistan, the Army provided the bulk of Landpower to fuel the counterinsurgency and the effort to rebuild the Afghan security forces under a stable government host government.

All of the major conflicts in U.S. history, though different in many ways, share common characteristics in the use of Landpower. In each case, the Army's objective was to gain control of an area of land in order to subject a certain enemy to our nation's political will. In some cases, control of the land was gained through the simple destruction of an enemy's ground forces. In World War II, the Army operated as part of a coalition that fought for the destruction of the German Army across multiple fronts. In Operation DESERT STORM, the Army maneuvered on and destroyed the Iraqi army in order to liberate Kuwait. In these examples, among others, the Army engaged in force on force fights for absolute control of territory.

However, there has been a resurgence in another type of warfare over the last century which has been significantly different than that of the more familiar dominant school of conventional war. In Vietnam, Afghanistan, and the latter half of the Iraq War, the United States did not gain control of territory by maneuvering on and destroying a visible enemy force alone. Counterinsurgency and low intensity conflict in these wars, and other smaller scale engagements around the world, have shown that a different type of warfare is on the rise, but does not replace traditional large-scale

conflict. Conflicts are now characterized as a mix between conventional and low intensity warfare, differentiated by the degree of the former or latter. In such conflicts, Landpower forces like the U.S. Army can adapt and continue to operate effectively in these environments.

Through analysis of previous U.S. conflicts and taking into account what the nation desires from the U.S. Army, the Army has published its latest doctrine on how it conducts itself as a Landpower force. Over the years, the Army's defined operational concept has changed from full spectrum operations to unified action to combined arms maneuver.²⁹ Each has catered to the emerging operational environment of its time, but all have retained key aspects for the use of Army Landpower. The new doctrine, unified land operations (ULO), found in *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0* is summarized as follows:

Unified Land Operations describes how the Army seizes, retains, and exploits the initiative to gain and maintain a position of relative advantage in sustained land operations through simultaneous offensive, defensive, and stability operations in order to prevent or deter conflict, prevail in war, and create the conditions for favorable conflict resolution.³⁰

Not surprisingly, the U.S. Army, the nation's primary Landpower force, both doctrinally and historically, fits well into Milevski's definition of Landpower. The ability to control time and space/land to take away an enemy's sources of power and to achieve our political objectives is a simpler way of defining the U.S. Army's ULO. It is clear that the U.S. Army plays the essential role in providing Landpower for the nation. This is not a new concept, however. The emergence of the ULO concept provides a different perspective on current and future Landpower operations for the U.S. Army.

ULO relies heavily on the joint capabilities of our Army, specifically its ability to operate in conjunction with other services, particularly the USMC and SOF. While Joint Operations is not a new concept, its growing significance leads to the idea that Landpower in the current age is provided most effectively in a joint endeavor. Simply put, strategic Landpower is becoming a more well-rounded use of our nation's various Landpower assets. In the following analysis, other major U.S. Landpower assets do not fit perfectly into the Landpower definition as does the Army. Their current structure is ill-suited to providing Landpower to the nation individually. Strategic Landpower is becoming a synthesis of the unique capabilities of all three Landpower forces within the U.S. military.

Strategic Landpower and the USMC.

For the Marines, Landpower operations are shorter in duration, because they are meant to serve as America's expeditionary force. This combined with their ability to operate with the Navy has helped to develop their specific mission set. However, as their mission set has begun to evolve over time the Marines have begun to publish more types of doctrine. Each version offers a unique view into their spectrum of operations. As far as the Marines are concerned, there is no definition of Landpower and how land operations should be conducted as a whole. The closest the Marines have come to developing a strategic doctrine is a publication that defines what the strategic level of warfare is and how it relates to politics. At this point in time, the Marines do not delve much into the strategic realm of combat. While this is not a major issue, it will become difficult to integrate the Marines into a Strategic Landpower Task Force.

When examining the USMC as a whole, it becomes clear why their publications would list them under the Navy. Since the Marines are an expeditionary force, they are not meant to conduct long-term operations. Since they tend to be focused on the short-term, they have only written documents that pertain to the tactical level, while barely covering anything that is done on the operational level.³¹

The task organization of USMC units does not look beyond the tactical level. Any support that the Marines receive at the operational and strategic levels comes from the Navy. The Marines maintain a very small internal logistical chain. This helps to keep the USMC in their role as an expeditionary force. In terms of logistics at the operational level, the Navy delivers all supplies. Additionally, medics are not internal to the Marines.

Although the USMC does not appear to be as dedicated to strategic level thinking, they would still fit well within the role of strategic Landpower. The Marines are proficient when it comes to operating within the framework of Landpower as they operate similarly to the way the Army operates. If one were to look at the definition of ULO, "how the Army seizes, retains, and exploits the initiative to gain and maintain a position of relative advantage in sustained land operations," it is easy to see that, with the exception of the sustainment portion, the definition could be directly applied to the Marines.³² Throughout their history, the Marines have managed to demonstrate their tactical proficiency.

During World War II, it was easy for the Marines to fit a specified mission set. Given the way that the United States needed to operate in the Pacific, it was easy for the Marines to establish themselves as the leaders of amphibious assault. This is because amphibious assaults are meant to be quick actions much like an expeditionary operation. One battle that fits the role of the Marines, while also showing some of the complications with their operating methods, is the Battle for Peleliu Island. Since the island was isolated, the Marines had to rely on a naval artillery barrage to prep the beach. Once the Marines landed on the beach, they were able to secure the beach quickly and capture the airfields on the island. Even though Peleliu is only roughly eight miles long, the Japanese established defense in depth which halted the advance of the Marines. In preparation for the operation, the Marines had to prepare supplies before they landed on the beach because they did not have a sustainable logistics chain for such operations. For the assault itself, the Marines carried “rations for 32 days, water enough for 5 days . . . medical supplies to last 30 days, and a 20-day supply of clothing, fuel, lubricants, and miscellaneous equipment.”³³ Unfortunately for the Marines, the operation lasted about 75 days. In order to complete the mission, the Army had to assault the other side of the island. The added support from the Army allowed the stalled Marines to continue fighting, and together the Army and Marines were able to capture Peleliu.³⁴ This goes to show that the Marines are capable of fulfilling their duties as an expeditionary force, however, their lack of logistical support binds the Marines to this mission. Ultimately, this prevents the Marines from being able to take on larger strategic goals by themselves.

The purpose of the USMC often comes into question because they typically perform operations similar to the ones that the Army conducts. One example is the Vietnam war. The upper levels of Marine command were motivated by the fact that the purpose of the Corps was being questioned. While the fighting was going on, the Army’s higher command began to advocate for the USMC to be disbanded because the Marines were using “unimaginative tactics.”³⁵ The USMC command argued that they had “trained from the same manuals as the Army and employed basically the same infantry tactics of fire and maneuver.”³⁶ Another counter to this is that during the Vietnam war, the fight on the ground seemed to resemble expeditionary operations. The United States was not holding territory and conducted quick strikes, which played more to the advantage of the Marines. Not only were their logistical concerns not as evident, they were able to prove that they were still a relevant portion of the U.S. military.

While the Marines may not be a truly stand-alone force, they do still play a role within the realm of strategic Landpower. If they are left to operate as the nation’s expeditionary force, then the Marines can help to seize the initiative. However, it should not be expected to retain the initiative.

Unless something is done to improve the technological and logistical capabilities of the Marines, they will only be able to operate in conjunction with another force or only in the initial phases of battle.

SOCOM in Strategic Landpower.

SOF conduct operations that aim at specific strategic and tactical targets. These targets consist of national military, political, economic, or psychological operations.³⁷ They are used as small units for indirect or direct military actions, and they focus on strategic and operational objectives. These objectives are “characterized by certain attributes that cumulatively distinguish them from conventional operations.”³⁸ This means they are deployed for very sensitive missions, which make them a valuable and proficient tool to be used when needed. Avoiding mission failure and detection are two important criteria in consideration for tasking special operations in execution of policy. They are often used to provide support to the rest of the land force before and after missions. They do not have the manpower nor are they equipped to fight in sustained combat operations. However, they are specially trained and uniquely equipped to carry out a variety of operations to break into “hostile territory through land, sea, or air”³⁹ SOF cannot have a similar definition of Landpower as the Army and Marines, because they are special forces that provide the support necessary for the main ground forces of the Army and Marines to carry out strategic Landpower missions. SOF do not have the capabilities to destroy an enemy’s ability to be an independent political player in opposition to our will. However, they are able to hurt and pressure the enemy for a certain time. The USSOCOM Fact Book states that SOF cannot be mass produced; they are quality, not quantity.⁴⁰

SOF have been used since World War II in many special operations, but not all operations were conducted on land.⁴¹ Some were also conducted in the sea such as Operation EARNEST in 1987 to 1988.⁴² In this operation, American SOF played a pivotal role protecting Kuwaiti tankers from Iranian aggression. It was seen as a convoy operation because the tankers had to be escorted and secured in the open sea. The U.S. Army SOF used their helicopters to provide security in the air. Navy Seals were used to assist and intercept the enemy if he attacked.⁴³

This is an excellent example of SOF being used in a joint seapower role. In this operation, the Army Special Forces and Navy Seals were both used to conduct seapower. In Vietnam 1966, the U.S. Air Force SOF played a big role as adjunct to Landpower from the air.⁴⁴ Also, SOF have been used heavily in Iraq and Afghanistan as Landpower. Most of the time, they were used to provide

foreign internal defense by providing assistance and training to foreign forces to achieve their own national security and interests.⁴⁵ This is an example of SOF used as a Landpower for a long term. However, their operations are unique and they perform a different purpose than the Army and Marines.

Many would argue that SOF should be categorized within the term “Landpower” because they perform missions similar to the Army and Marines. They were often used as auxiliaries to the main Landpower forces in many conflicts. This could be true, but they were always ready to be used in a seapower or airpower role when needed. Therefore, they should not fall under the same Landpower definition as the Army and Marines. However, they can have their own Landpower support definition, as evidenced by their use in recent conflicts to control isolated ground regions. Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in northern Afghanistan is a good example of how SOF were used for months on land to “change the government of Afghanistan so that the country was no longer a safe haven for terrorists.”⁴⁶ This is an example that shows how SOF could be used as an auxiliary Landpower force. However, this is a special operations unit that hurt the enemy and supports Landpower in execution of primary ground forces by denying enemy control of areas and limiting his military capabilities, but it does not decisively destroy the enemy. The Army and Marines are the services best suited to execute sustained combat and stability missions against the enemy. The Army and to a lesser extent the Marines have the logistical support, manpower, and conventional capabilities that SOF do not.

SOF are simply not a conventional force like the Army and Marines. They should have their own definition of Landpower separate from the main ground forces in execution of strategic Landpower by the Army and Marines. This could help craft a more clear understanding of when the Army, Marines, and SOF should be used.

Conclusion.

Based on the Milevski definition of Landpower and its concept of control, the Army alone follows the concept of strategic Landpower in the accomplishment of national policy objectives. The Marine Corps and SOCOM have been used in a variety of roles over the last half-century in a limited Landpower role in multiple conflicts. Due to the execution and adoption of many Landpower missions by the USMC and SOCOM, on the surface it may appear that both are suited

to carrying out strategic Landpower. However, the USMC lacks the logistics and technology to carry out sustained combat operations without external support; and SOCOM does not have the manpower, heavy equipment, or structure to execute major operations over a large land area.

Due to the constraints on the USMC and SOCOM and the primary focus of both on quick, decisive operations in joint or covert mission sets, they are better suited to Landpower support. The Army possesses the logistics, manpower, structure, and equipment necessary to execute sustained combat and stability operations in the execution of strategic Landpower. The ability of the Army alone to execute Landpower does not preclude it from carrying out Landpower missions without the USMC or SOCOM. Rather, when the nation requires strategic Landpower, the USMC and SOCOM should work in support of the main effort by the Army. If strategic Landpower is not needed in a definitive ground conflict with another foreign power, then the USMC and SOCOM may be employed as the primary effort in effecting a strategy of denial to limit enemy effectiveness. When a large ground conflict is needed, the Army, along with support from the USMC and SOCOM, attempts to control time and space in enemy territory in sustained combat operations to bend the enemy to our will resulting in an extended period of stability operations in the post-war phase.

The Army, USMC, and SOCOM fall into definable roles for their use in pursuance of national policy objectives. The Army fulfills the role of strategic Landpower in the execution of large national efforts to subdue an enemy on his own territory with the support of the USMC and SOCOM. The USMC is used for expeditionary operations in quick, decisive operations in support of the Army or Navy and in limited stability missions due to its logistical limitations. SOCOM is used for carrying out small, high-risk/low-detection missions to deny the enemy access to capabilities or territory. There is no definition of Landpower that incorporates all three services equally. Based on the current structure and mission sets of all three services, their integration should be based on a loose command umbrella for coordination of Landpower assets to execute strategic Landpower in the national interest.

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